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the work of Pater. As yet, unfortunately, we possess no proper estimate of the relationship and debt of the English pre-Raphaelite and æsthetic movement to the German Romanticists of the "blue flower."

It is in the word rather than in the phrase that we must continue to look for Pater's greatness as an artist. He himself early realized that his sense of rhythm was defective, for Mr. Wright conclusively shows that notwithstanding Mr. Benson's statement to the contrary, he endeavored to write verse, but without success. Therefore, it is to the eye rather than the ear that he makes his appeal; his is the art of the mosaicist who picks out his rich materials bit by bit and lights up or shadows them into precision, nuance or suggestion like some master workman in a shadowy apse of Monreale or Venice. It is a self-conscious kind of expression which Mr. Wright compares to that of the fashionable Claytons who used to preach in lavender kid gloves. Yet Pater smashed no domestic crockery merely to make a noise in the world; but built up slowly and surely a structure of beauty in its ultimate and purest conception. If his writings never brought him more than three hundred pounds a year, he might remember Renan's remark that "nothing is less important than prosperity," and if in glancing back over his half-lonely, half-misinterpreted life we find that it teaches a moral as well as an artistic lesson, we reach a conclusion in which there is no doubt that he, the English great master of "Art for Art's Sake" would himself rejoice.

THOMAS WALSH.

"NINEVEH, AND OTHER POEMS."*

A NEW poet is an event; and the mere promise of an accomplished and important poet is a matter of unusual moment. In "Nineveh, and Other Poems," Mr. George Sylvester Viereck has shown himself a poet, and has given promise of importance and accomplishment to come. His present volume exhibits a natural aptitude for emotional expression. He speaks in spontaneous and eloquent verse, melodious with memories of the recurrent haunting harmonies of Poe, the sea-surge of Mr. Swinburne and the plangent tenderness of Oscar Wilde, and ringing also with a

* "Nineveh, and Other Poems." By George Sylvester Viereck. New York: Moffat, Yard & Company. 1907.

certain hammer-blow of passion which is entirely his own. He speaks with authority of the half-sensuous and half-religious hysteria of adolescence. He knows the awe of ancientness, the reverence of mystery, the sanctity of beauty. He knows both one and the other phase of the adolescent conflict between the body and the soul. He is capable of blasphemy and prayer. And he has imagination, chiefly of the panoramic sort. So many remarkable qualities united in the work of a poet only twenty-two years old make his volume worthy to be read; and the hope these qualities awaken of what he may become, makes his volume worthy to be studied.

I call him a poet not because of his fluency of verse, which is largely a matter of repatterned auditory reminiscence, nor because of the content of his work, which is as yet devoid of message; but because his best pieces are alive. They have an individual existence, apart from what they say or how they say it. They seem to have sprung full-grown from their creator's mind. They are born, not made. But, on the other hand, he is as yet neither an important poet nor an accomplished one. He is not important, because he is empty of great things to say; and he is not accomplished, because he has not learned to say things perfectly. But he gives promise of becoming both important and accomplished; and the best service that may be rendered to him, therefore, is to point out what as yet he lacks and indicate the lines along which he must develop in order to become of real value to the reading world.

It is only because I appreciate and laud his easy spontaneity of utterance that I presume to call attention to his technical defects. He seems to write entirely by ear, just as some people play the piano, rather than by studious and consciously commanded artistry. The ardor of his composition almost disguises the fact that he really knows very little about rhythm; but the fact betrays itself in certain pieces, and once betrayed, grows evident in nearly all. For instance, he is unable to command blank verse, the most delicate of English rhythms. The lines in "Aiander" are thumpingly end-stopped and almost without variety of cadence. One wonders at how much the writer's ear has failed to hear in the blank verse of the masters,—Milton and Tennyson, for example. Again, in his *vers libres*, he lacks sureness of auditory purpose in his alternation of long lines with short,—the kind of

sureness, I mean, that Wordsworth exhibits in his ode on "Intimations." He obeys the dictates of his rhythmic mood, rather than making his rhythmic mood obey the dictates of his mind. For this reason he almost always fails to maintain a stanzaic form that he has invented, and changes his mind about the form with each new stanza. He defends this practice in his preface; but a poet, with the example of the odes of Keats before him, admits weakness when he pleads for unnecessary license. His longer poems are shaky in structure: it is evident that he began to write them before he had them firmly built. He dashes gallantly through the province of a poem, instead of marching firmly to take possession of reconnoitred ground. Because of the weakness of his structural sense, his sonnets are less effective in their form than in their content. The reason for all these defects is that Mr. Viereck has not prepared himself for composition by a thorough study of the greatest versifiers. He has allowed his ear to be allured by the magic of minor masters; and being over-gifted with natural facility, he has not entirely discovered how much he has to learn.

Again, it is only because I appreciate and laud the passion and the poignancy of the things he has to say that I presume to call attention to the fact that these things, as yet, are not of prime importance. He knows mightily the riot of the senses and has felt with anguish the growing-pains of the soul. But his experience seems entirely of the world within himself rather than of the world without him. He knows nothing about nature and very little about men and women; and what he knows about the gods has been taught him, not by looking on at life, but by his own fears and hectic eagernesses. His god is finally the Sphinx,—the master of those who do not know. Much of his eroticism is derived, and therefore prurient; some of his soul-sorrow is literary. Of love, in its higher aspects, he is as yet apparently innocent; and his beautiful sonnet on "Friendship" suggests sadly that he is still a seeker unsatisfied. What he needs chiefly is a broader experience of life, and a knowledge of ideality externalized. It is time for his emotions to cease feeding on themselves; it is time that he should discover elements of beauty in normal, healthy and objective life. It is time that he should learn the things that people really need to know, in order to speak them with his voice.

Mr. Viereck owes it to himself to fulfil his promise; and he owes it even more to those who wait for poets in the world. With

his natural aptitude for utterance, he should not find it difficult to master English verse in ten years of unremitted labor. Whether or not he will find it difficult to grow to be a great man is another matter, and a more important one. Keats and Shelley were great men at Mr. Viereck's age; but with them the gods were hasty and allowed them little time. Mr. Viereck is as yet only a possibility; but his possibility is glorious. I, for one, will wait hopefully to see what he does with his life, himself and his work.

CLAYTON HAMILTON.